

## The underrepresentation of African American NCAA FBS coaches from 1997-2006

Trevor Bopp, Texas A&M University

Michael Sagas, Texas A&M University (Advisor)

**Socio-cultural  
Session 9**

**Thursday, May 29, 2008  
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

**Poster  
Abstract 417**

There is a current push from the Black Coaches and Administrators (BCA) to Myles Brand and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) calling for an implementation of the "Eddie Robinson Rule" (Harrison, 2007). The Eddie Robinson Rule is a directive similar to that of the NFL's Rooney Rule, requiring institutions to interview minority candidates during the process of searching for a new head coach. The aim of both rules is to help ensure minority candidates receive proper consideration for all head coaching vacancies. The underrepresentation of African American head coaches is clearly an area of concern for intercollegiate athletics given that during the 2006 NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS, formerly Division-IA) football season, only 4% (5 out of 119 teams) of the head coaches were African American: Sylvester Croom of Mississippi State, Karl Dorrell of the UCLA, Turner Gill of Buffalo, Ron Prince of Kansas State, and Tyrone Willingham of Washington (Lapchick, 2007). This study examines the racial makeup of coaching staffs over the past 10 years to discover which institutions and conferences facilitate the presence of African American coaches and provide the greatest (and fewest) opportunities within the NCAA FBS.

Anderson (1993) suggests the pipeline to a head coaching position traditionally begins with assistant coaches. He explains that holding an assistant coach position is often a precursor to becoming an offensive or defensive coordinator, and in turn, holding a coordinator position is often a prerequisite for becoming a head coach. Given this linear path from assistant coach to coordinator to head coach, it is only logical that percentages of African American coaches would remain equivalent as one was to move up the college coaching ranks. This is not the case. During the 2006 NCAA FBS football season there were 282 (26%) African American assistant coaches. Of those 282 assistant coaches, only 31 (12.8%) were either an offensive or defensive coordinators (Lapchick, 2007). The concern extends even further when one considers that student athletes in football are often times the largest candidate pool for coaches of football (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998). It may not be expected that percentages of African Americans on coaching staffs be directly proportional to the racial makeup of the team, but the disproportion of African American coaches as one moves up the coaching ranks is unnerving. In 2006, 49.4% of student athlete football players were African American, yet only 4% of head coaches were African American (Lapchick, 2007).

This study was directed by three research questions. The first question asks which institutions have been the most facilitating to the employment of African American coaches over the past 10 years. Similarly, the second question is whether conference affiliation has had any impact on the hiring and representation of African American coaches over the past 10 years. The final question focuses on the coaching careers of African American offensive and defensive coordinators by examining the number of years in coaching as well as the number of institutions at which they have coached.

Data for this study were collected shortly after the completion of the 2006 NCAA football season. Media guides and biographies were downloaded from official athletic department websites of all 119 NCAA FBS member institutions. The majority of coaching staffs were comprised of one head coach, nine assistant coaches, and two graduate assistants. Data were collected on each coaches' race, position coached (quarterbacks, offensive coordinator, offensive line, running backs, wide receivers, tight ends, defensive coordinator, defensive line, linebackers, defensive backs, and special teams), and coaching experience (when and where they have coached). Strength and conditioning coaches, recruiting coordinators, operations managers, and other staff were not included in the data collection. Data answering research questions one and two were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The third research question was answered performing two-sample t-tests on all African American coordinators and an equal number (n=31) of randomly selected White coordinators.

The average number of African American coaches on an institution's coaching staff ranged from .20 - 2.80 per year over the 10 year span of 1997-2006. Miami (M=2.80, SD=1.03), Nebraska (M=2.80, SD=1.03), Northwestern (M=2.70, SD=.48), Michigan (M=2.60, SD=.52), and Southern Miss (M=2.60, SD=.97) were the top five schools while the bottom four spots were held by Central Florida (M=.20, SD=.42), Tulsa (M=.40, SD=.84), Rice (M=.40, SD=1.26), and Kansas (M=.40, SD=.52). The average number of African American coaches per conference team's coaching staff ranged from 1.06 - 1.94 per year over the 10 year span of 1997-2006. The Pac 10 and Big Ten conferences have employed the most African American coaches, averaging 1.94 (SD=.57) and 1.84 (SD=.59), respectively. The Sun Belt Conference (M=1.06, SD=.42) and Conference USA (M=1.08, SD=.76) have employed the least.

Results testing the lifetime careers of African American offensive coordinators (n=14) to White offensive coordinators (n=14)

## 2008 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2008)

were not significant,  $t[26]=2.06$ ,  $p>.05$ . On average, an African American offensive coordinator began his coaching career in 1991 and has made 5.71 (SD=2.49) coaching stops along the way. In comparison, the average White offensive coordinator began his coaching career in 1986 and has changed institutions 6.23 (SD=3.37) times. Similarly, results testing the lifetime careers of African American defensive coordinators ( $n=17$ ) to White defensive coordinators ( $n=17$ ) were also not significant,  $t[32]=2.04$ ,  $p>.05$ . On average, an African American defensive coordinator began his coaching career in 1992 and has made 5.41 (SD=2.18) coaching stops along the way. Comparatively, the average White offensive coordinator began his coaching career in 1984 and has changed institutions 6.24 (SD=2.91) times.

Findings concerning the offensive and defensive coordinators are positive in that they demonstrate both African American and White coordinators have taken similar career paths to achieve their current positions. Findings concerning the entire population of African American coaches in NCAA FBS football illustrate steps are being taken in improving the racial make-up of coaching staffs, albeit not at rate or progression all would like to see. Every conference has increased the average number of African American coaches on their teams' staffs from 1990 to 1997 and onto 2006. While this trend cannot be said of every institution, it can be said for most that the racial make-up is progressing towards a more equal representation of African American coaches at the levels below the head coach.

The underrepresentation of African American coaches in NCAA FBS football has been receiving more national attention yet still remains an issue plaguing the NCAA and its member institutions. As an African American moves up the coaching ranks, it seems the opportunities for success become less and less available. This phenomenon may be in decline as most institutions and the NCAA are taking the proper steps in alleviating this concern. It is hoped the trends identified in this study show a move towards a more equal racial representation at every level (i.e. head coaches, coordinators, and assistants) of the coaching staff.